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GEORGINA WELDON · LUNACY LAWS · MUSICAL REFORM

ENT. STA. HALL.

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HOW I ESCAPED THE MAD DOCTORS.

A thrilling narrative of Personal Experience, showing by what means large numbers of perfectly sane and intellectually-endowed individuals of both sexes are immured in Madhouses for life, at the instigation of relatives; in carrying out whose behests a class of men drive a lucrative trade. An appeal to every noble-hearted Englishman and Englishwoman to cry aloud for the Reform of the LUNACY LAWS.

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HOW I ESCAPED THE MAD DOCTORS.

IN the short Lecture I intend reading to you I cannot go into details which are, in truth, necessary to make you believe or understand me. I know my story is so unlikely that, without any other proof than my word of honor, I cannot expect any one of you to accept without reserve, the facts—stranger than fiction—which I am about to relate. This lecture is in print. At the end of it is published a list of a variety of books and pamphlets written by myself, all bearing on the same question, after which, if you will give yourself the trouble of perusing with care; you will—although the series is not yet completed, I know, feel that I am not only a very

truthful person, but that I am singularly fortunate in possessing Documents—*written evidence*—confirming most positively all I have ever written or said. I do not even think you will accuse me of exaggeration, those facts which I tell you I have no written proof of, seem so probable—(bearing in mind the circumstantial evidence I can adduce and which, were it a question of hanging or penal servitude for life in the case of a poor friendless boy—let me here remind you of that of William Habron, the unfortunate hero of the Whalley Range murder)—would be considered quite sufficient to deserve a Verdict of Guilty.

I must first tell you that I am some years past forty, and that though my appearance is youthful you may trust my years as well as my discretion. I am not a young, smart, capricious lady—amusing herself by making herself look conspicuous, but a middle-aged, sober, well-nigh heart sick woman, working for many years in the cause of Education, and you may believe I never cared for admiration or Society. It did not feel true and I could not feel natural in an atmosphere reeking with every kind of luxury—I thought of the poor, I thought of the Gospel and how that a rich man could not enter the Kingdom of God—I was not of a preaching disposition—It would have seemed blasphemy to speak of such things in the atmosphere I breathed; I had simple tastes,—I did not take to crinolines when they were in fashion, I disliked long

dresses and very full skirts, I did not like high heels to my shoes or boots, I wore my hair short, I indulged in a linen apron, I liked to go to bed and to get up early.

When I gained experience by gradually following the natural aptitude and delight I had for teaching, I saw my way to combine Education with Art, Art with Commerce, and I learnt that, in this age, nothing could exist without Publicity being achieved. By Publicity I mean Advertisement. I therefore advertised as much as my limited means would allow. I devised many inexpensive ways for attracting notice. It appears that this was considered *insane* by my relations—but they never told me so. I had, in fact, never heard of my being insane till January, 1878, when the lady who had lived with me for two years, Madame Ménier, who was in Paris with me, received a letter from her husband, (who had taken possession of my house in London and who absolutely refused to leave it because he knew I was a married woman and had no legal power to turn him out,) informing her that "It was not likely „ Mr. Weldon would take any pains to turn him out „ of his wife's house, as he was trying to get her into „ a lunatic asylum," . . . . . . I must not forget to say that Madame Ménier and I were abroad with my Orphans then, and that I was waiting for warmer weather to return home. I must also mention that Mr. Weldon and I had never had any

quarrel, that in 1875 on account of a terrible sorrow which had come upon us in 1874, I had asked him to let me have the house for two or three years to continue with my Orphans so as to dissipate most infamous and most horrible calumnies which had been spread about us, and which had almost broken me completely down. He was to live close by, and if, in three years, I had not succeeded in my plans, I proposed that we should jog on together as we had for many years—in peace, at all events—if not in happiness. He consented, without any demur, and I worked hard to retrieve what had been lost. I explain thus much because it is essential to my narrative that you should understand I was unaware that Mr. Weldon bore me any ill-will, and I certainly bore him none. I could not respect him at all; but when one is married, one had better ignore many things which occur to trouble one's peace of mind. I never was of a preaching disposition, and I could never nag any one into doing anything I wanted.

In 1878, therefore, when Mr. Ménier wrote to say Mr. Weldon was taking measures for getting me into a lunatic asylum, I laughed at the idea!—and not long after that, as I had not succeeded as I had hoped I should, I proposed that Mr. Weldon should return to Tavistock House. Mr. Weldon had not been near me for two years and nine months, and I had not so much as seen the tip of his nose; I attributed this to certain reasons detailed elsewhere.

However, I grew rather uncomfortable in March, 1878, as I received a letter from his lawyer, Mr. Jevons, to say he was going to sell my house. In answer to a letter I sent him saying I did not in the least wish to sell the house, Mr. Jevons wrote that Mr. Weldon wished to know where I wished my furniture stored ! ! ! . . . . He wrote another day to say that his agent, Mr. Neal, had taken possession of the house for Mr. Weldon, and enclosed copy of a letter of Mr. Neal informing him that Mr. Ménier had claimed certain things in my house which, *as they were insignificant*, he had given him permission to carry off.

I cannot see that Mr. Neal had any right to allow Mr. Ménier to carry off my things, however insignificant. Two of the insignificant articles condemned by Mr. Neal as such, being a pair of large mahogany and glass cupboards which new had cost £175, and which were as good as new!—I will not now dwell on how undoubtedly it is proved Mr. Weldon, Mr. Neal and Mr. Ménier were in league, and how, to prevent the whole plot being exposed, I was very nearly caught and placed in a lunatic asylum. These letters of Mr. Jevons made me so anxious, I took the first train and came home and entered it just in time to save many things from going the way I found heaps of my possessions had gone—Mr. Ménier rushed out of the house as I entered it—a curious proceeding—for he had per-

suaded Mr. Neal and Mr. Jevons that I owed him £178 1 1, according to a false statement of accounts he presented them with (they not requiring a single voucher!). If I owed him money he need not have run away from me! The fact is, he was in my debt £300 or £400! On searching my premises I found my jewel case emptied, and things to certainly the value of £500 missing; I was fortunate enough to get him arrested and locked-up at once. I had had him up at Bow-street before Mr. Flowers twice. On the second occasion he was again locked up and remanded without bail, (this was on Saturday, 13th of April). I prosecuted him without the help of a solicitor or barrister. I was in perfect good health and in the best of spirits, for, through Ménier's trial and the possibility of bringing certain facts before the public, and certain letters discovered by me proving the existence of a conspiracy against me, I looked forward to being enabled, at last, to disprove many calumnies which had been spread abroad concerning me, and which owed their origin to my leading a very quiet life at home teaching the Orphans. It had got about I led a very mysterious life—from a cancer in my nose, to keeping a bad house—I do not think you could think of anything vile or scandalous which had not been circulated against me. I cared little what any one said, I knew my life was a blameless one, and that though persons or the press could back-bite and slander me with impunity—(through my position as a

married woman, neither separated or divorced)—no one would be able to substantiate the slightest thing against me in a Law Court; I used to have a great idea of the ease with which one could obtain redress for an evident wrong—a belief, I assure you, I no longer entertain.

Well, on Sunday morning, 14th April, 1879, I was no more thinking of mad doctors, mad houses, or keepers than you all were this morning, perhaps not so much, for most persons now have had their attention drawn to the word "LUNACY" this year, and have a sort of inkling it is not "all right." I was at home in my favorite room. The bell rang about 10 a.m., my maid came and asked me if I would receive two gentlemen named Shell and Stewart; thinking it was a Mr. Stewart I was acquainted with, I said I would receive them. It was not the Stewart I knew. They told me they had come to know if I would receive some Orphans into my Orphanage, talked half-an-hour and departed. In the afternoon several visitors called, amongst others General Sir Henry de Bathe, who I had not seen for more than a year and who, though I had known him many years, had never been an intimate friend. The only reason I imagined him devoted to me was because he had vowed me his eternal gratitude. I, with my husband's consent and at Sir Henry de Bathe's request, had been the first lady who had consented to visit Lady de Bathe on her marriage in 1871.

Sir Henry had run away with her when she was sixteen years old, had lived with her and had had a tribe of children with her and then made up his mind, tardily enough, to marry her. It is, though an indelicate subject, essential to my narrative that I should clearly explain how it was there was any kind of friendly feeling between us. Sir Henry that day was in a hurry and he stayed about ten minutes. It was about half-past 2 p.m. when he called.

In the evening, one of my old servants was paying me a visit (on my return home) the other maid, the one who had opened the door to Messrs. Shell and Stewart in the morning was out, the bell rang, and the broker's man Mr. Weldon had put in possession of the house to turn Ménier out (and who did not turn him out) came to tell me the two gentlemen who had been in the morning, Messrs. Shell and Stewart, had returned and wished to see me again. Bell, was this bailiff's name, and although neither he or I could understand why he should be kept in my house with strict orders not to leave it on any account or to allow me to take anything out of it, we were very good friends, as he was a very hard working, useful man and had a nice little girl to whom I took a fancy. Bell and I consulted with each other as to the propriety of allowing these gentlemen to enter at so late an hour (it was past eight o'clock) but as we were discussing, the two gentlemen stood behind him, they had, in reality, followed him straight in. But!

it was not Messrs. Shell and Stewart, and I said so: "No!" said one of them, "but we come from them so we thought it best to give the same names." They explained they had come about the Orphans, that they were anxious to settle them, &c. (The whole conversation is described elsewhere.) It came over me, while they were talking to me, that they were bad men seeking my ruin. Ménier's letter to his wife came into my mind as well as the remark about "*Mr. Weldon trying to get me into a lunatic asylum,*" and I immediately suspected that these two men (as well as the two men in the morning) were Ménier's allies, and that he had planned that if ever I found out and convicted him of theft, he would cause me to disappear from the face of the earth. The letters I had found caused me to take this view, for they proved that seven days after they had been written, an attempt (which apparently the Gounods and the Méniers had planned) had been made in Paris to kidnap me. This attempt took place on the 17th December, 1877. I had, since I had given Ménier in charge, received a proposal from an accomplice of his, offering to return all the stolen articles, and any sum of money I might ask, if I would but let him go; if I refused, he threatened he would spend his last franc to ruin me. Ménier had not only cleared me out wholesale, but had calumniated me in a most shameful way. One of the stories, being, I poisoned my Orphans, that I received

£1000 a piece for them, and that three of them were buried in the garden. Bottles labelled POISON had been found lying about the house; when they were picked up, it was said that that was how I managed to let the children poison themselves and had forgotten to remove the bottles when I had left home. Although I knew there must have been thousands of Gounod', £s. sterling behind Ménier, I refused all kind of compromise and replied that justice must take its course. I attribute as reasons for the hurried attempt to get me into a lunatic asylum (just at that time) the followlng "*Anxiety on Mr. Weldon's pat t to prevent my getting Ménier committed for trial for reasons apparent—Selling my house himself and fearing the fact might come out in cross examination—conniving with Ménier to allow him to rob me.*" How do I know if a great many things Ménier has carried off are not in my husband's possession? At all events, Ménier told his wife he would not be condemned to more than three or six months, that Mr. Weldon would not press the charge. All he said turned out true. Another of the reasons Mr. Weldon wanted to get rid of me was (without going into the *pecuniary advantage* to him my loss would have been) that he was comfortable as he was, and did not want to come back and live at Tavistock House as I had proposed he should, and did not know how else to avoid this dilemma.

To return now to the 14th April and the visit of the second batch of Messrs. Shell and Stewart. Half-an-hour after they had left me a carriage drove up to the door, the bell rang, and a man and two women stood at my front door. My maid had gone to Chelsea and had not returned. *For the first time in my life* I felt nervous and would not go to bed till she came in. I had, *for the first time in my life*, put the chain up on the Hall door and I told Bell not to open the door to these people, as something I call my guardian angels, had given me a sign warning me I was in very immediate and grave danger. Death, I felt it meant. . . . . I am certain had I been caught that night I should never have been heard of again alive. When you have read "my story" you will feel convinced of the correctness of my surmises. My maid was out, Bell, a bailiff, a stranger to me was the master of the house, paid by Mr. Weldon to execute his orders, but, thank Heaven, God put it into his heart to be faithful to me; so when the trio told him to open the door, that they "Wanted to see Mrs. Weldon" (although he had told them she was in bed) "and that he was there for Mr. Weldon," he slammed to the door and would not answer their repeated pulls at the bell or knockings. Doubtless they had a good bribe for him and they would have bribed him then as they tried next day to bribe the police to help them in their endeavours to hunt me down, and which continued for about a week.

I must tell you that, from reading the *Spiritualist* and the *Medium* I had become acquainted with the name of Mrs. Louisa Lowe and the subject of Lunacy Law Reform. Feeling certain that these mysterious visits and visitors were something to do with the vile system she had denounced, I felt extremely desirous of going to ask her advice on Monday morning. Something kept me at home, providentially enough, for it appears cabs and people were stationed at each corner of the Square all the morning to catch me in case I went out. I employed my morning by sending for and speaking with the police with whom I settled that they should be in the dining-room at a quarter-past six that day, and that I would receive no stranger till half-past six; I arranged with them to put any one (who did not give their names, their addresses, and clearly explain what their business with me was) in charge as trespassing on my premises for an unlawful purpose. I wrote several letters to different friends acquainting them of the extraordinary warning I had received and of the supposed danger I was in at the hands of Ménier and Gounod.

The morning of Monday passed. No strangers called. Mr. Neal had been to see "*if I had any news from Mr. Weldon or from Mr. Jevons, as he had none!*" While he was speaking to me in the corridor, a man rung the bell and asked my maid if Mr. Neal was there, I saw the man, and though,

when he came again that afternoon, I did not remember where I had seen him before, my maid did. This was perhaps the principal cause of my being saved from the mad doctors. The man, I feel sure, identified me then so as to be sure, when the hour for carrying me off came, there should be no risk of carrying off the wrong party. I had told Mr. Neal about my visitors of Sunday, the strange carriage, &c., I had telegraphed to Sir Henry dc Bathe to come up to me at once; I have no doubt Mr. Neal came to see me (having heard from Mr. Weldon of the miscarriage of the plot the night before) to make sure I was at home so that I might be entrapped somehow or another that day. I continued strongly impressed by the desire to go and seek Mrs. Lowe. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, Bell came to tell me a Mrs. Thomson wished to speak to me, at the same time whispering to me he "*believed it was one of last night's females.*" . . . . "All right, tell her Mrs. Weldon cannot receive any one till half-past six that evening." Mrs. Thomson departed, saying she would return at that hour. She had not been gone five minutes when, to my utter astonishment and delight, Mrs. Lowe's card was sent in. I joyfully welcomed her, told her my story and asked her opinion. She said that in the existing state of the Lunacy Laws nothing was unlikely or impossible, and that I might be in the most horrible danger. We had not talked ten minutes when Bell knocked at my door. He did not come in when I

said "Come in," I therefore went to the door, I found him standing at the door ashy pale shaking from head to foot in the greatest state of agitation, "*Those three,*" he said to me in a hoarse whisper, "*have forced their way into the Hall, say they will not leave, and that they will wait there!*" I did not feel the least frightened then, but I asked Mrs. Lowe to go off to the station and fetch the Police. Telling me to lock myself in my room, she departed. Unfortunately, instead of going to Hunter Street (the nearest station), she went to Tottenham Court Road, so that the police she brought had not been forewarned. (who had called in the meanwhile), and the two Armed with them, Mrs. Lowe, another lady friend policemen to whom I had rapidly told what I suspected was the matter, I went into the Hall and asked "*those three*" what they wanted. Mrs. Thomson (as no doubt she was) seemed much flurried, and mumbled something about an Orphanage and that Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Stewart had said I should know—. They ended by laying hold of me, upon which Mrs. Lowe shouted "they are assaulting you, tell the police you give them in charge!". I did as she told me, shaking the two women off at the same time and running back to my room where I again locked myself in and where I remained at least two hours. My maid was out when all this happened, and I fancy these wretches always watched her out before they rung at the door for fear she should answer the bell. When she came in she went and fetched the

Hunter Street police, who, when they arrived, made Mrs. Thomson and Co., say what they dared to be in my house for. Judge of my surprise and indignation when Mrs. Lowe came to the door and told me they were madhouse keepers armed with a Lunacy Order signed by Mr. Weldon. I felt quite certain it was an impudent forgery and telegraphed immediately to my husband to "come up at once" and told him what was the matter, I wrote several letters to the press, to my mother, and to friends in Paris to tell them of my extraordinary adventure and awaited with trustful calm Mr. Weldon's appearance as well as with joyful anticipation the "happy despatch" style he would turn them all out. I waited and waited, every minute seemed to grow an hour, Mrs. Lowe assisted by my maid (the policemen looking on) at last, turned the keepers out herself, then begged me to open the door and to leave the house. Being put into a lunatic ayslum she knew, by experience, was worse than death, that I should be driven mad in an hour, that I did not know how bad husbands were, that she believed it was all Mr. Weldon's doing, that he had neither come or sent an answer, that if I stayed I was a doomed woman, and that no power on earth could get me out again if once I got put in. I can never describe how enraged I felt at anyone daring to say or even hint at Mr. Weldon's being suspected of such a cruel abominable act, which to my eyes seemed the lowest and most cowardly form of attack man or woman could be

guilty of. It struck me, as it strikes me still, as worse than murder, and in my case, (for many reasons obvious to all,) ten times worse than in any other I have ever heard of, for I was not out of bodily health even. In almost every case where persons have been hurried into lunatic asylums, they have, at the time, been suffering from some complaint—low and nervous from bronchitis, milk fever, rheumatism, &c., but I was in the most robust health and in the very best of spirits, irksome to no one, interfering with no one in any way, so how could I suppose, or entertain for one moment the belief that my own husband with whom I had never exchanged so much as a cross word was capable of contemplating such hideous cruelty, such an appalling crime!—I thought Ménier and Gounod (after the documents indicted by them or their allies of which some were in my possession, others in that of the police) capable of any horror—but Mr. Weldon! No! Never! I would not leave the house till he came. I felt so sure he would fly to my rescue. I did not, at the time, think anything of his trying to sell the house and turning my things out of it, I did not think of what I have seen through since, the conniving between Mr. Neal and Mr. Ménier to carry my things off—I could not then have believed in such fiendishness, and if I believe in it now, it is because the belief has been forced upon me. They all implored of me to fly—Bell did, the policemen too—my maid knelt down and kissed my hand, and stroked it and said " dont be angry, I feel

"sure it's all Mr. Weldon's doing, that man, who "came to take you, is the same who called to see "Mr. Neal this morning! He told me so himself." This shook my faith in Mr. Weldon; still I thought it more likely Mr. Neal and Ménier were in league than that Mr. Weldon could be a party to such an outrage. However, what with Mrs. Lowe, who had thus so providentially been moved in the Spirit to come and see me for the first time in her life, and my maid's entreaties, I made up my mind to go . . . . so in greatest haste, I threw my cloak over my shoulders, my bonnet, without waiting to put on my boots, in a pair of wonderful old slippers, ran down the Square, the policeman stopped a cab ("I am not looking at the number!" he said) jumped into it, Mrs. Lowe took me to her house and I was . . . . SAVED!!!

How wonderful it is that I was saved! I had apparently acted most imprudently, spared no pains to get trapped—not only had I telegraphed to Sir Henry de Bathe and my husband, but I had forbid the chain being put up on the door during that day lest any outsider should think I was taking precautions for safety—I wished to catch the villains and march them off to Hunter Street Police Station, I had confided all my fears to Mr. Neal (my husband's solicitor) so *he* was in possession of what was really an important secret. The carriages and keepers had been waiting for me in the Square all the day—but at the hour I had the imprudence to run away down the Square, the coast was clear! The object of this Lecture, therefore,

is not, as some people say, to cater for the public's pity or sympathy for myself, but it is written and read for the purpose of arousing their indignation, their righteous wrath, and to force Parliament to amend a state of things which is so monstrous that it seems fabulous! I certainly wish the public to support me, for the more hold I gain over the public so much the more will Parliament listen to me on behalf of many thousand victims, now lingering in those horrble dens among idiots, raving maniacs and deranged simpletons, of which the sight for half-an-hour only is enough to drive one out of one's mind. That's the sort of company Sir Henry de Bathe and Mr. Weldon intended me to associate with during the remainder of my miserable life. Ducked into passive obedience by cruel brutal attendants, deprived of all communication with my friends, I should not have known what had become of my orphans. Had I ever escaped (half witted as I should no doubt have become and my health impaired) I should have found my home sold, myself divorced and *disgraced* (which they tried hard to do at Ménier's trial), my orphans scattered, and the brand of insanity stamped far deeper on my brow than it is now. Most of those who come to see me and listen to me, I am perfectly aware, come to see "the Lunatic" They do not care to know whether I am good, talented, or virtuous, else I should have been run after years ago. The only thing the public really sympathises with or runs after are great criminals such as Peace, and other

favorite murderers, "Sir Roger," &c., or persons accused of crime such as poor Mrs. Bravo and my friend Dr. Slade, who might, both of them, at one time, have made thousands by only showing the tips of their noses. To be accused of "*insanity*" is I really believe, a royal road to popularity, if one has philosophy, good temper, courage, common sense, and principle to sustain one. It appears to me that what with one desperate effort and another I may not only succeed in crushing those who sought to crush me (which I am not hypocrite to deny is a most gratifying sensation), but that my sufferings, my troubles, the insults and outrages I have undergone may be rewarded by the feeling that my name alone shall have been useful in forcing a Reform in Laws which ought never to have been compiled —and which, as many other of our idiotic Acts of Parliament, are a disgrace, not only to England, but to the world . . . . . .

As I have had Writs served on Sir Henry de Bathe, Drs. Winslow, Winn, Rudderforth, and Semple, and Mr. James Neal, and that I pray for substantial damages to be awarded me as some compensation for the *irreparable* injury caused me by their conduct, I hope I may at some future time have the pleasure of announcing that the Law has, after all, some good in it, and that it may order me to be paid a sum sufficient to enable me to continue my Orphanage on the principles explained in my other writings.

In conclusion, I think I better add, (in case any one should doubt the possibility of any relations existing between Mr. Ménier and Mr. Weldon,) that on the 15th of March, Mr. Ménier, when he emerged from Coldbath Fields, went to the Hotel Comte, 21, Golden Square, from whence straight down to Mr. Weldon's, at 9, Albert Mansions, Victoria Street, Westminster. To my mind, it is the clearest case of conspiracy that ever was heard of. Conspiracy is always most difficult to prove in every detail, at the same time it seems very difficult to expose it or to obtain redress. Had I been quite a poor woman, unable to pay printers; in spite of all my courage and energy, I should have been quite ruined long ago.

GEORGINA WELDON.

London, March, 1879.

LIST OF BOOKS.

1. "Autobiographie de Ch. Gounod, et Articles sur la Routine en Matière d'Art." Edités et compilés, avec une Préface par Mme. GEORGINA WELDON. (120 pages). Prix 6fr. (5s.)

2. "Mon Orphelinat, et Gounod en Angleterre." Lettres de Ch. Gounod à Mme. WELDON, etc., et documents originaux, etc. (Environ 300 p.p.)

3. "Mon Orphelinat, et Gounod en Angleterre." Récit par Mme. WELDON. Déscription de sa méthode de chant, d'enseignement, etc. Prix 12fr. 50c. (10s.), (environ 250 pages).

4. "La Déstruction du Polyeucte de Ch. Gounod." Mémoire justificatif. Par Mme. GEORGINA WELDON. Prix 1fr. (1s.)

5. "Musical Reform," "Gounod Concerts," and other Articles on the Musical Trade. By Mrs. WELDON. Prix 2fr. 50c. (2s.)

6. "The Quarrel of the Albert Hall Company with M. Charles Gounod." By Mrs. WELDON. Prix 1fr. 25c. (1s.)

7. "Hints on Pronunciation, with Proposals for a Self-supporting Academy of Music." By Mrs. WELDON. Prix 1fr. 25c. (1s.)